

Statement from Croton Water Control Commission
Regarding Proposed Millennium Pipeline
Crossing of Croton Wellfield

November 2002

The Village of Croton-on-Hudson obtains its drinking water from shallow wells in a narrow sand gravel aquifer in the Croton River valley. Our wellfield, which serves some 7100 residents, is the Village's sole source of municipal drinking water. Croton's drinking water quality is regarded as among the best in the country. To protect this drinking water supply from potential sources of contamination, and consistent with Federal and State policy, including the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Village has enacted laws to protect it. The Water Control Commission finds the proposed Millennium Pipeline crossing of the Croton Wellfield is in violation of local Village law and inconsistent with Croton's Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP).

LWRP POLICY 38 states that

The quality and quantity of surface water and ground water supplies, will be conserved and protected, particularly where such waters constitute the primary or sole source of water supply.

Village Local Law No. 5 of 1989 – Water Supply Protection Rules and Regulations establishes three groundwater protection zones. The most restrictive is Zone 1 – Wellhead Protection Area, which extends a minimum of 200 feet from all Village Wells and includes the "cone of influence" induced by a pumping well. Any contaminant that reaches the groundwater within this cone of influence will be drawn into the well.

Regulations specific to Zone 1 state:

All systems, facilities and activities are prohibited except for physical pumping and treatment facilities and controls. The area shall not be used for any purpose except public water supply.

The proposed Millennium Pipeline route crosses the Croton Wellfield directly within the Village's designated Zone 1 Wellhead Protection Area.

The pipeline will cross the wellfield and the Croton River just a few feet below grade. The water table in the aquifer is extremely shallow, also just a few feet below ground surface. The aquifer and the river are in direct hydraulic communication and pumping of the wells induces downward flow of river water to the well intakes. Even using best management practices for construction, an undeniable potential exists for spills of gasoline, lubricants, or other hazardous materials. Given the downward hydraulic gradients and high porosity of the aquifer, such spills could easily end up at the well head before they could be cleaned up.

Down the road, during operation of the pipeline, leaks cannot be ruled out. Any escaping gas that became dissolved in groundwater near the wells could potentially contaminate them. A leak from even a small hole in a distribution system can affect the odor and taste of groundwater and possibly cause health problems.

Furthermore, the proposed pipeline route limits the Village's future ability to expand our wellfield to meet a growing population's water demand. On peak days, the three operating wells are already pumping at or near capacity. We have no functioning backup well. The potential area available for water supply development in this narrow valley is already restricted by the Croton River, and the nearby Village boundary with Croton Gorge Park. The pipeline crosses in the exact area that the Village's groundwater consultant had designated as the best spot for a future supply well.

Public water supply sources have been contaminated in numerous instances because of systems, facilities, and activities which were not properly managed or were not appropriately located in relation to public water supply sources. The people of the State of new York have a right to expect, and the Commissioner of Health is obligated to see, that every reasonable precaution and measure is taken to protect water supply sources from contamination and that safe drinking water is available from public water supply sources and systems.

In conclusion, the Millennium Pipeline proposed route is clearly inconsistent with Village Law and LWRP Policy 38. It does not adequately protect the Village's sole source drinking water supply, nor its ability to find and develop additional supply in the future. To allow a gas pipeline to traverse a public wellfield is neither prudent nor responsible resource management.

Respectfully Submitted

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